

What You Should Know About the Agricultural Engineering Practitioner Certification Program

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WHAT IS THE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM?

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Agricultural Engineering Practitioner Certification is a service provided to Land Conservation Department technicians and other persons who design, review and approve agricultural engineering practices. Certification is a means of exempting county and state employees from state licensure when they are engaging in specified engineering practices.

The certification program is administered by the DATCP field engineering staff in accordance with state administrative rule (ATCP 50.95), and is designed to complement the engineering support services they provide. Wisconsin state statutes provide for quality assurance by requiring that certified practitioners or professional engineers approve agricultural engineering practices for funding under DATCP's Soil and Water Resource Management program and DNR's Nonpoint Pollution Abatement program.

WHY WAS THE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM DEVELOPED?

In 1991, Senate Bill 281 directed DATCP to establish, by rule, a certification program for agricultural engineering practices. This bill was developed by a special committee on nonpoint source pollution that based its recommendations for certification on the following goals:

- 1) Extend the exemption for engineering licensure that had been available for SCS staff (now NRCS) through the Job Approval Authority (JAA) to County Land Conservation Department employees;
- 2) Promote state wide uniformity of engineering service and oversight;
- 3) Provide a mechanism of quality assurance for state funded conservation practices; and
- 4) Ensure continuity of the previously mentioned goals in the event of SCS withdrawal.

DOES CERTIFICATION PROVIDE PROTECTION FROM LAWSUITS?

Certification or licensure as a professional engineer can not prevent the occurrence of a lawsuit being brought against you or your employer. However, working within your personal capabilities, within your assigned job duties, and within your certified level of competence, as recognized by law, greatly enhances your defense in the unfortunate event of a lawsuit.



Before and after — installation of a streambank protection project along the Wisconsin River.

HOW WILL MY CERTIFICATION LEVELS BE ESTABLISHED?

Your DATCP field engineer will establish your certification rating for various agricultural engineering practices based on your demonstrated knowledge, training, experience and record of appropriately seeking assistance. Ratings are in five levels of complexity for design and construction oversight of practices. In making these determinations, the DATCP field engineer may rely on interviews, quality assurance reviews, installation inspections, design documents, and references provided by others.

If you now have a JAA rating your initial certification will be based on a translation of your JAA. Subsequent updates of your certification may be requested at any time by contacting your DATCP field engineer. Certification ratings will be reviewed at least once every three years. Modifications to your certification may result in raising, lowering, or reaffirming ratings for one or more practices. If you disagree with a determination made on your certification you should appeal to the assigning field engineer in writing within 10 working days.

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CERTIFICATION AND JAA?

In recognition of their parallel roles, and in an effort to pool agency resources and avoid duplication, the JAA was redesigned concurrently with the development of the Certification program in order to create a seamless process that would enable recipients to meet the requirements of state and federal programs. Concurring signatures by DATCP and NRCS assigning engineers is all that is necessary to receive the dual rating of Certification and JAA. This collaboration does not restrict either agency from delivery of JAA or Certification independently, if it should become necessary.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT CERTIFICATION?

We encourage you to read the applicable laws pertaining to certification: DATCP's administrative rule ATCP 50.95 details the workings of the certification service; and Chapter 443.14 Wis. Stats. creates the exemption for certified county and state employees from being licensed as engineers.

To access ATCP 50 or find the [Agricultural Engineering Certification Form \(Appendix E of ATCP 50\)](#):

<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/code.htm>

For training opportunities in Wisconsin visit the Wisconsin NRCS website:

<http://www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov/about/training.html>.